

Women in Western Civilization: The Workbook

By Wendy Adele-Marie, Ph.D.

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Outline of topics

Unit One

A. Introduction to Women's History

Introduction: as we explore the history of women in Western Civilization, we will use primary sources, as available, to help these women's voices and stories emerge. Other times we will use secondary sources, or various general histories of different eras, events, and countries. Because of the lack of cohesive documentation of women's histories throughout the centuries, and while we have some larger, groundbreaking works such as Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zissner's [*History of their Own*](#), we will attempt to shape a story of women in Western Civilization by using a variety of sources, from music, poetry, art, and more. An interesting excerpt from Rosi Braidotti and Gabriele Griffin's, *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies* argued that in ancient times, women have been portrayed as having supernatural-like feminine powers, and that this construct of femininity has led to erroneous, and even erasure, of women's history:

Europe takes its name from a woman, [Europa](#), the daughter of the legendary king of Tyre, who was beloved by Zeus, 'the father of gods and men' as Homer would have it. Europa was carried away by Zeus in the form of a bull to Crete, where she bore him three sons. This link to Greece, the country that is also credited with being 'the cradle of European civilization,' associates Europe with seductive femininity and a specific locale.

Here are two general guides, the first is vast and general, and can be used for reference only, whereas the second is more academic. Then, a database of women in science, from ancient times to present, with the fourth link from the UN, a clickable timeline of the history of women's rights that you can also consult from as you move through the course.

- **Use as a guide:** [Women's History Resource Site](#) (website, biographical, non-scholarly)
- **Use as a guide:** [Fordham: Women in Ancient History](#) (website, encyclopedic, with many resources)
- **Women and Science** is a critical subject to review. Click on this site, [Scientific Women: Antiquity to Present Day](#), and there you will find a list of women that you can read about by period in time. As you progress through the course, you might wish to go back to this site to track what women in science were doing during the period that you are studying.
- **Use as a guide:** [Women of the world, unite! Explore women's activism from generations past and present](#)

B. Pre-history

Introduction:

Agencies of power and roles probably differed from community to community, but the evidence suggested that women held power and had flexibility of roles, were essential to governance, and

critical to trade, familial support, and community survival. Other facts about Prehistoric women and men include the following points:

- Oldest hominin ancestors possibly lived 7 million years ago
 - **Watch lecture:** [One cave. Three hominin lineages. Australopithecus and Paranthropus meet Homo in Drimolen with Dr. Sang-Hee Lee](#)
- Lucy, a female skeleton was found and is believed to be over 3,000,000 years old
 - **Watch:** [Lucy the 3.2 Million Year Old Mother of Man | BBC Earth](#)
- Paleolithic and Nomadic Women
 - **Watch lecture:** [Human Evolution with Dr. Sang-Hee Lee](#)
- Practiced animism (worship of nature spirits) and deities
 - **Watch:** [Divine Women: When God was a Girl](#) (video description: "Historian Bettany Hughes goes back to the beginning of time and visits the world's oldest religious site to find startling evidence that women were part of the very birth of organised religion. She visits a world where goddesses ruled the heavens and earth, and reveals why our ancestors thought of the divine as female.")
- Women collected, hunted, harvested, developed/honed tools
 - **Read:** [Prehistoric women's manual labor exceeded that of athletes through the first 5500 years of farming in Central Europe](#)
- Neolithic period
 - **Read:** ['Lady Of Bietikow' 5,000 Years Ago ...](#)
 - **Watch:** the [Venus of Willendorf](#)
 - **Then, read** pages 22-26 of [Ancient Goddesses](#)
- Ancient Egypt and women. Note that in some cultures, women were regarded legally equal to men, women could own property, borrow money, sign contracts, initiate divorce, appear in court as a witness.

- **Read:** (Internet Archive login required): [Ancient Egyptian Women](#)
- **Read:** [Egyptian Queen Nefertiti commanded that no more images be made of her as a woman—but only as a ruler.](#)
- **View:** [Egypt 231: Isis and Nephthys](#)
- **View:** [Female Pharaohs](#)
- **View:** [The Priestesses](#)
- [Enheduanna](#) is considered one of the first known female poet in history. Her poems of praise to gods and goddesses were highly popular in her time. After her father's death, the new ruler of Ur removed her from her position as high-priestess. She wrote of this injustice:

Me who once sat triumphant, he has driven out of the sanctuary.

Like a swallow he made me fly from the window, My life is consumed.

He stripped me of the crown appropriate for the high priesthood.

He gave me dagger and sword - 'it becomes you,' he said to me.

Enheduanna appealed to the goddess [Inanna](#) to redress her injuries:

"It was in your service that I first entered the holy temple,

I, Enheduanna, the highest priestess. I carried the ritual basket,

I chanted your praise.

Now I have been cast out to the place of lepers.

Day comes and the brightness is hidden around me.

Shadows cover the light, drape it in sandstorms.

My beautiful mouth knows only confusion.

Even my sex is dust.

- **Now, consider the poetry of Sappho.** Start by **reading or listening** to this [biography](#) of Sappho, then **review some of her poetry**, found here: [Poems by Sappho](#).
- **Finally, as a quick read, and to make connections, read this article:** [How ancient Egyptian civilization influenced the modern world](#)

Ancient culture flowed into Europe and had a global impact that fascinates us today, especially with the histories surrounding women, female rulers, and goddesses. Many images of Egyptian goddesses depict them as powerful, omnipotent, and mysterious. Isis, the Egyptian goddess of fertility and motherhood, was depicted as a benevolent goddess with magical powers, of whose image women would do well to uphold. Isis worship lasted until the sixth century CE, and poems exist that portray images of goddesses such as Isis in various images, but many were maternal in orientation. The pre-eminent physical images of women in ancient Egypt come from artwork, contemporary accounts, and funeral tombs. Slave women wore little, if any, clothing, while women of the upper classes wore straight shift-type linen dresses that usually came down to the ankle. Women also used makeup at this time. Lips and eyes were usually adorned with some cosmetics. Women in Ancient Egypt also wore many different types of jewellery, such as elaborate anklets, armlets, belts, bracelets, earrings, and necklaces. Women of the princely classes often had elaborate headdresses designed for them. Special attention was paid to the power of nature, and nature symbols were often found in headdresses and other items worn by women. Headdresses with flowers or other nature figures such as sea creatures or serpents (worn only by royalty) were usually made of gold and rare jewels and projected an image of importance and power. Women wore belts or girdles, usually made of gold or precious metals, adorned with jewels or fish symbols. Most jewellery was made out of gold in honour of the sun, which the ancients believed had unique properties. Women and men both wore amulets or special pendants that had illustrations on them. These illustrations varied but often included pictures of gods, goddesses, or animals. Almost all women wore jewelry, but only the very rich could afford elaborate jewels and costumes. Most women who were wealthy or who were members of the princely classes went out of their way to portray themselves as youthful, beautiful, and fertile. Found in funereal tombs, sculpture, artwork, and written works were many depictions of women, but most often, these were of women of the upper or princely classes. This class of women, in their tombs, would have different representations of themselves from birth to death. Often emphasized was the women's role in childbirth. Other ancient cultures also captured images of women, and the ancient Greeks were one group whose portrayals of women were contradictory.

C. Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome

Introduction: Men wrote contemporary accounts of images of women in ancient Greece, and no accounts by women of their images exist. One way to define images of women at this time is to view them in separate categories, including goddesses, wives, mothers, enslaved people, and prostitutes. The Greeks classified Demeter as the mother goddess in the goddess category and Hera as the wife goddess. While it was clear that the ancient Greeks also outlined classifications

of women as wives and mothers, it remains apparent that they also saw women as evil or corrupt, depending on the context. The ideal feminine role for this society was when men were in charge of all women, which brought order to society since women were depicted as capable of going out of control — significantly since many learned men and Christian church officials believed "women's lust knows no bounds" — unless dominated by men. On the other hand, while women were portrayed as "necessary evils," they were also revered because they were the bearers of new life. The ancient Greeks were quite interested in the body functions of women, viewing female gynecological functions as something extraordinary, and attempted to explain how a woman's body worked, from puberty, through menses, childbirth, and maturity. The ancient Greeks also defined images of women in poetry. In his book *Works and Days*, the seventh century Greek poet [Hesiod](#), described not only when a man should marry but also the ideal woman for a man to choose as a bride. Note the sexist imagery that Hesiod incorporates as he gave his advice:

"The right time to bring a wife to your home is when you are only a few years younger than thirty, or just a few years old. This is a time for marriage. Five years past puberty makes a woman a suitable bride. Marry a virgin so you can teach her right from wrong. Choose from among the girls who live near you and check every detail, so that your bride will not be the neighborhood joke. Nothing is better for man than a good wife, and no horror matches a bad one, a glutton who reclines to eat and needs no fire to roast even a stalwart man and age him before his time."

Hesiod, as did many ancients, placed enormous importance on the image of a woman as a virgin, chaste, and untouched by any man, so that a man could best form her image as he saw fit. States of frugality and chasteness were highly prized images for all women to cultivate.

Reference: Adele-Marie, Wendy. *Images of Women*, Chicago: Roosevelt University, 2005.

Women were often excluded from histories of religion, worship, and power for thousands of years. Start with the first film, then move on to the readings. As you progress through these materials, ask yourself, why were women omitted from these histories? Did women represent a threat or challenge to existing power structures?

- Women and the Ancient World
 - **Watch:** [Divine Women: Handmaids of the Gods](#)
 - **Watch:** [Lecture on Wonder Women of the Ancient World](#)
 - Consider, what are we learning about power that women held, and displayed?
 - Hypatia ((born c. 350–370; died 415 CE), was a teacher, astronomer, philosopher, mathematician, and renowned scholar. For providing political advice, she was murdered. You can review her work here [Hypatia of Alexandria, female philosopher, astronomer and mathematician](#) and: [The death of Hypatia](#)
 - **Then, review this excerpt** from [Socrates of Constantinople, a contemporary of Hypatia, and consider how he described her:](#)
 - There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and

science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions. On account of the self-possession and ease of manner, which she had acquired in consequence of the cultivation of her mind, she not infrequently appeared in public in presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel abashed in coming to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more. Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed. For as she had frequent interviews with Orestes, it was calumniously reported among the Christian populace, that it was she who prevented Orestes from being reconciled to the bishop. Some of them therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called Caesareum, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril, but also upon the whole Alexandrian church. And surely nothing can be farther from the spirit of Christianity than the allowance of massacres, fights, and transactions.

- **View lecture:** [Ancient Women Warriors](#)
 - What does this lecture teach us about the roles that women had in defense and in times of war?
- **Read:** [Women in Ancient Rome](#) (download PDF)
 - How diverse was women's work in Ancient Rome?
 - How does this next brief lecture explain how historians viewed women's work in Ancient Rome?
 - Watch: [Women in Ancient Rome: Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire](#)

Unit Two

D. Early Medieval

Introduction: When I researched women in ancient Rome, I discovered that women learned trades, owned businesses, held fairs, and much more. Then, in Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zissner's *A History of their Own*, they assert that women in the 10th-12th centuries had more rights than their more modern counterparts of say the 18th and 19th centuries. The authors document women learning a trade and serving in craft and merchant guilds (these were not so much a union as an association of artisans and craftspeople who worked together on many tasks, including the distribution of items, price setting, and sales of goods. See: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/guild-trade-association>).

As I wrote in my textbook *Women and Work*, I discovered that women from urban areas, such as London, Munich, or Paris, experienced a different way of life. Households were entwined with shops, stalls, taverns, and sleeping houses, as urban centres were quite crowded. However, while more opportunities existed in the city, women were also more likely to be exploited economically and sexually. Women were generally not educated in trade and usually worked for their fathers or other male relatives in a well-established trade. If they could not take over the trade or found themselves in a circumstance without a stable household, women were often forced into low-paying or low-status jobs, including working as servants or forced into prostitution. If a woman's husband owned a business, and if he died, leaving the property to her without a direct male relative to inherit the same, often she was in a better position than her peers were. Women could inherit their deceased husband's business and run it themselves. These businesses included shops, taverns, and foundries. Laws even existed that forced women to oversee apprenticeships left outstanding by their late husbands. Consequently, widows could legally take over or go into a trade, would be able to continue training male apprentices, and could employ other women as well as men. Women in other major cities throughout Europe worked in various industries, including brewing, waitressing, lace making, and bookbinding. Women who lived in rural areas also worked in various industries, including weaving, spinning, and farming.

If from a peasant or farming class, women in rural areas could perform various tasks. Women of the lower or peasant classes worked alongside their husbands on a farm in addition to cooking, cleaning, and raising children, and usually without servants. These tasks were designed not only to provide sustenance for their own families but could be performed to pay rent to a landlord or for barter at a market. Women planted seeds, harvested grains, threshed, plowed, brewed ale, maintained livestock, slaughtered animals, weaved, sewed, and built items for their household or sale. Some of the goods women could sell at the market included ale, bread, flowers, grains, herbs, meat, wines, and edible preserves. Women could also produce goods with tools and implements provided by another, known as piecework. Piecework, where workers were paid by the amount they produced rather than the actual hours they worked, meant assembling an item piece by piece or creating pieces that would comprise a part of a product. An example of piecework would be cigars. Some German women in the nineteenth century assembled cigars in their homes; often, entire families assisted the mother in their work with tobacco. Women executed piecework for hundreds of years, even until the twentieth century. In the twenty-first

century, there are still areas in the world where piecework is still performed. Outside of piecework, many women were self-employed in the early modern world, as were numerous women who lived in urban centers.

Reference: Adele-Marie, Wendy. *Women and Work*, Chicago: Roosevelt University, 2004.

As the centuries progressed, women's roles became further conscripted, and while power and agency was reduced, there were still women who emerged as critical leaders of their time. For a general reference guide, keep the Reference guide bookmarked, and then proceed to the readings and lecture.

- *Reference guide only:* [Women in the Middle Ages: World History Encyclopedia](#)
- **Read:** [Women in 1066](#) (download PDF)
 - What does this reading reveal about women's roles in 1066?
- **Lecture:** [Medieval Women's Rights: Setting the Stage for Today](#)
 - What surprised you about early feminism in the Medieval age? As the lecture explained, "The medieval church gave birth to the misogynistic rhetoric that continues to hinder women's progress in the West today, but it also witnessed the first real "feminist" rumblings of discontent." Why would the church allow for this rhetoric?
- **Read:** (Internet Archive login required) chapters four, five, and six of: [Women and work in Medieval Europe](#)
- **Read:** [The Medieval Queens Whose Daring, Murderous Reigns Were Quickly Forgotten](#)
- **Watch:** [Jadwiga, Female King of Poland](#) (1373/4-1399)
- **Watch:** [Margrethe I of Denmark](#) (1353-1412)

E. Late Medieval

Introduction: As time progressed, what were other women's roles in the medieval world? Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zissner's [A History of their Own](#) suggested that western European depictions of women tended to focus on women who were strong and in power as "bad" and women who fit the mother construct as "good." Women in power were threatening to the early modern European (and later periods as well - arguably to this day) idea of order, even though women held positions of power and influence, especially within religious institutions, princely classes, and artisan groups. Sometimes, there has been an erroneous depiction of women as entirely subversive to men. While misogyny was prevalent, and in some countries women were defined legally as property, and were legally subverted, women did work alongside with men, joined artisan guilds, held property rights, and among the noble and princely classes, governed large estates. Yet, these facts have been largely absent from general histories of western civilization, and as you learned from the lecture on Medieval Women's rights, it was the medieval church that depicted women in a misogynistic fashion that caused a decline in women's status and rights. As Anderson and Zissner have suggested, women in the 12th century had more rights than women in the 18th century.

- **Read:** [Women, Health, and Healing in Early Modern Europe](#) (download PDF)

- Think about what you learned about the critical role women had in medicine and healing
- **Read:** [Uncovering the Secret: Medieval Women, Magic, and the Order](#) (download PDF)
 - Why were women associated with magic and secrecy? Why was this portrayed negatively?
- **Read:** [The Problem of Women's Agency in Medieval and Early Modern Europe](#) (download PDF)
 - What were some of the main points that the author wanted to convey about women who held a position of power or influence at this time?
- **Watch:** She-Wolves: [Maud and Eleanor](#)
 - This documentary focused on two of the most powerful women in Europe at the time, yet, their powers were subsumed and removed from contemporary as well as modern accounts, largely until the 20th century.

Also, what of women and maternalism?

Typically, history has taught us that maternalism was a sign of weakness. In the noble and princely classes of Medieval Europe, pregnant women went into confinement, where windows and access were closed off, with men being present at the births, especially if the woman was a princess or a queen (to witness the birth). So we have a duality, where a woman's value in these specific classes was tied to her ability to give birth, have a son (think of [Henry VIII](#)) and then have her children live to adulthood, all things that she had no control over. Claire Ridgeway is a historian who is one of the leading experts on [Anne Boleyn](#), the second wife of Henry VIII. Here, she discusses the work of Sarah Bryson on maternalism in medieval and in the Renaissance: <https://www.tudorsociety.com/childbirth-in-medieval-and-tudor-times-by-sarah-bryson/>

Other jobs crucial to the functioning of pre-modern societies included midwives and wet nurses. Women who worked as midwives were important to women of all social classes, as they were responsible for assisting with childbirth. Wet nurses were also integral to society. Wet nurses could be employed privately by members of the upper or princely classes. In France, women who worked as wet nurses would take orphaned babies into their homes and breastfeed them for relatively short periods in exchange for a salary. For their work, town or government officials and private families would pay these women, who often nursed several children at once. These medieval European women's experiences are in direct contrast to the power of Native American women seen through the lens of maternalism; there is a link to Mother Earth, as explained here in this site by Native Hope, who look at the injustices (and near genocide perpetrated against the indigenous peoples), history and current needs of the Native American populations throughout North America: <https://blog.nativehope.org/celebrating-the-power-of-native-women-and-native-mothers>

Here are some general conclusions from the readings and lectures:

- - -
 - Attitudes held by many, including the Church, argued women were inferior to men

- Unmarried women holding lands were powerful and had the same rights as men
- When a woman married, in most cases she forfeited her lands and rights to her husband; these women were referred to as femme coverts, or covered women
- Church life: abbeys
- Role of nuns (private and communal)
- Insular, but power/influence allowable
- Medieval women did work, and joined trade guilds, or worked alongside their spouse or family members
- Day to day life/Midwives/Wet-nurse
- In times of war, women were sometimes in charge of the defense of homes
- Socioeconomic differences
- Aristocratic women 5% of population
- Peasant women
- Food, Famine, Manorialism (producing labor and food for nobles) all issues women faced
- War, Rape, Infant Mortality over 50%
- Disease, Childbirth, Ageing
- Appearance: hair worn long signified virginity and a single state
- Married or widowed women covered their hair
- Known as the domestic patronage theory, queens, princesses, and noblewomen became economic resources for the patronage of writers, philosophers, artists, musicians, and sometimes members of the clergy, which some saw as unnatural for women to wield such influence

What other points, or general conclusions could you draw from these units on women in the middle ages? Another general reference guide is found here:

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1345/women-in-the-middle-ages/>

F. Renaissance and Reformation

Introduction:

For Reference purposes only, you may wish to first review [Introduction to women of the 16th-18th centuries](#)

Images of women in the middle ages and the Renaissance varied. Women were often depicted as either a mother or a whore. Many contemporary images portray women as good (mother) and evil (whore), with few variances. Men were usually the ones who predominantly depicted women in this manner. The medieval world was chaotic, with war, famine, and disease much a part of people's lives. People of all classes sought order and stability, and categorizing women in explicit images of good and evil was one way to define societal norms. Chastity and virtue were emphasized as ideal character traits for women to uphold. Moreover, some writers believed that

chaste and virtuous women could calm and even tame wild, uncouth men, so women were depicted then as rational and bipartisan, while at the same time depicted as weak because women “leaked.” Women were not always happy to have feminine images portrayed as either good or evil, and many sought to redefine feminine images as somewhere in the middle of good and evil. Many female writers also condemned masculine ascribed sexualized images of women and images of women that portrayed them as mentally flawed compared to men. They argued that unflattering or unfair images of women promoted by male authors did a disservice to women who had never wanted to be portrayed in ways that depicted them as inferior to men in almost every way, from physical health to emotional stability, to mental acumen. Moreover, many women asserted that such imaging brought harm to their gender. In response, women such as [Christine de Pisan](#), the very first professional female public writer of the time, and [Marie de France](#), the first female poet of France, attempted to convey women in poetry, songs, and other writings not as overly sexed but as sane, rational beings in charge of their bodies and able to someday, given a chance in a highly gender-segregated society, to compete equally in the world alongside men.

- **Watch:** [Why were the lives of ordinary 16th and 17th century women largely undocumented?](#)

Women's stories have been lost to history, yet scholars uncover stories of women from a variety of sources, such as ecclesiastical records that historian Suzannah Lipscomb uncovered.

- **Read:** (Internet Archive login required): pages 1-197, of [Uppity women of the Renaissance](#) The text is a light-hearted look at women's contributions throughout the Renaissance and the author has uncovered women that serious scholarship has yet to cover, or has not included.

As I wrote in *Women and Work*, In pre-industrial or medieval Europe, women were as important as men to household maintenance. Maintenance meant that a woman would be responsible for managing the household, including taking care of children and any elderly family members and working in her home and farm to keep the family unit functioning. Often, the only forms of support and sustenance were the family's goods, such as livestock and crops. The household was usually comprised of, but not limited to, a husband, wife, children, servants, extended family, or friends. The physical household included the existing home, property, animals, and goods such as lace, linen, or pewter. When a man and a woman planned a marriage, inventories were drawn up that listed items comprising the dowry. In many instances, women and their dowries were viewed as bartering objects for the men in their families since marriage was the first step in establishing a household. In many families throughout Europe, women were considered critical financial assets for the establishment and the continuation of a household since women were responsible for various tasks, from managing servants to running farms or an entire estate. From all levels of social class, women were responsible for assisting with the household, farm, or accompanying estate. If necessary, the woman was also responsible for bringing in extra income to help support the family. The next lecture shows you portraits, jewels, costumes, weddings, households and much more. Women of the upper classes also worked. Many women ran large country estates. Large estates were designed to be self-sufficient and generally had their buttery, slaughterhouse, and brewery on-premises. Some items had to be imported from other areas, such

as meat that was not raised on the person's property or specialty items for holidays. Many women were responsible for not only overseeing day-to-day management but had to keep detailed inventories of everything from silver to livestock, as well as account books of household expenditures and profits. Women of the upper classes, educated on household management, kept these detailed accounts of household expenses to ensure that the estate could control expenses and maintain a profit. Household management for the gentry and princely classes became an essential part of retaining a self-sufficient status, and women were an integral part of this domestic work structure.

- **Watch:** [The World of Renaissance Women](#)

Throughout early modern Europe, women were also accused of witchcraft. Why? What threats did women represent to order and power? At a time when sorcery was condemned, and superstition was everywhere, women were targets (as were men). Read this short essay, then proceed to the film

This source is a part of the *Women in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800* teaching module. Perhaps the most spectacular manifestation of early modern European discrimination against women was the conviction of thousands of women for witchcraft. Over three centuries, more than 40,000 people were executed as witches, 75 percent of them female. The greatest witch hunts occurred from the 1550s to the 1660s in the Franco-German borderlands, areas wracked by the religious struggles of the Reformation. The following excerpt comes from the most famous manual for witch hunters, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches) written in 1487 by a Dominican monk, Heinrich Kramer (1430-1505). The Pope appointed Kramer an inquisitor in 1484, with the mission to eliminate heresy in southern Germany. Kramer moved ruthlessly to do away with witches, who were believed to gain evil powers through pacts with the Devil. Written to justify his actions, Kramer's manual presented witchcraft as a growing threat to Christianity, arguing that witches not only used their powers against common folk, but also led Christians to perdition. Kramer also argued that women were particularly susceptible to the crime because of their inability to control their passions, a commonly-held viewpoint. Although never officially accepted by the Church, Kramer's work greatly influenced secular magistrates across Europe; it was they who ordered the execution of the majority of so-called witches. "Long Teaching Module: Women in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800," in World History Commons, <https://worldhistorycommons.org/long-teaching-module-women-early-modern-world-1500-1800> [accessed May 16, 2022]

- **View:** [The History Of Witches](#)

Therefore, as seen with analysis of the the 1486 book *The Malleus Maleficarum* (Latin for "The Hammer of Witches", or "Hexenhammer" in German) (see: [Malleus Maleficarum](#)) the accusation of witchcraft was historically used to tag women who represented something other than the collective "norm" or as a way to demonize/isolate/separate women who might have had something that others wanted (e.g. property) or as a way to control/stop what was deemed as harmful insurrection to the community.

Yet, throughout the Renaissance, women were very influential in art and culture, and as artists or patrons, their contributions are critical to helping us uncover women's thoughts, work, histories, and narratives.

- **Watch this lecture:** [Women as Artists and Patrons: Renaissance Exemplars](#)

Concerning the Reformation, women played a key role in this period, yet the age is almost entirely synonymous with Martin Luther. The Reformation brought out the idea that the Christian God and women could have a direct relationship without an intermediary (Lutheran ideology), which was attractive to many women, especially those of the noble and princely classes.

- **Watch this brief lecture** with Sukeshinie Goonatilleke and women and the Reformation: [Sisters in Arms: Courageous women of the reformation](#)

G. Women's Rule

Introduction: women who governed or ruled, whether as [queen regnants](#) (women who ruled in their own right) or [regents](#), (women who temporarily held power for a child, or in the absence of a king, most typically their husband, when he was away at war, as Catherine of Aragon did for Henry VIII, or as Anne of Austria did for her young son Louis XIV).

- **Read:** (Internet Archive login required) pages 1-62 of [A History of their own: Women in Europe from prehistory to the present](#)
- **Watch:** [Game of Queens with Sarah Gristwood on the most powerful women of the 16th century](#)
- **Listen:** [Podcast with Sarah Gristwood on female monarchs, queen regnants and regents, and women's power in 16th century](#)
- **For a list of queen regnants in Europe**, see: [List of Women Rulers in Europe](#)

One of the most well-known queens in history was Elizabeth I. The daughter of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII, her time of rule was known as the "Golden Age".

Watch this documentary [Elizabeth I: From Prison to Palace](#) that explains how perilous the journey to the throne was for Elizabeth.

In some cases, *especially in the case of the regnants*, the way women wielded power was erased from history, as seen in the case of Catherine de Medici. Nicolo Machiavelli, the author of the treatise *The Prince*, has become synonymous with masculine expressions of power. However, although the book was dedicated to Lorenzo di Piero de Medici, it was Lorenzo's daughter, Catherine de Medici, on whom *The Prince* had the most influence. Catherine became Queen of France, was queen regnant for three of her son, was for a time the mother-in-law of [Mary, Queen of Scots \(short film\)](#), and, according to Jean Héritier, author of *Catherine de Medici* (2020), the person most influenced by *The Prince* was Catherine, since neither her father nor its author lived to see it published. Héritier has stated that he asserted that Catherine drew from *The Prince* the

negative aspects of governance, including the annihilation of enemies – although Hérítier was careful to remind the reader that Machiavelli meant this as a form of survival for a leader – to destroy enemies. Hérítier argued that it was the influence of Machiavelli that led to Catherine ordering the 1572 massacre of French Protestants, which historians such as Samuel Totten and others classify as a genocide.

Watch these videos, for an introduction to a few queen regents:

- **Video:** [Catherine de Medici, Queen of France](#), regent, and one of the most powerful women in Europe
- **Video two** (optional): [The château of Catherine de Medici](#)
- **Video three:** [Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV of France](#)

Other influential women of the court were the Ladies of waiting. Around the thirteenth century, the ladies of waiting emerged as an essential and influential part of courtly life. For centuries, their overall influence was debatable, but the women who were close to the princesses and queens of Europe had an agency of power unparalleled for most women of the time. Courts societies centered on patronage, and the ladies of waiting were at its heart. For example, when marrying a man of a different country than her family, princesses and other important noblewomen brought ladies to their new countries. The ladies were companions, dressers, and confidants and could promote their families by putting in a good word, say, for a brother who wanted to attend court with the hopes of gaining a position of power for himself as a courtier. A lady could also ask the queen for a favour, and if the queen could not personally grant it, she could ask her husband, the king. Favours included bringing younger sisters or female relatives to court to work as ladies and, although seldom, for consideration on anything for their families from tax reductions and legal settlements to, and rather boldly, land grants. As careers at court could alter a family's socioeconomic status and political standing, and since positions at court were highly sought, the influence that the ladies had cannot be underestimated, as their work in court challenged male-dominated courtly and political structures.

- **Watch:** [Lady-in-Waiting - what did they do?](#)
 - For a light-hearted, non-scholarly - and entirely optional - look at the Ladies, see: [Royalty 101: What is a Lady in Waiting?](#)

One of the most prominent men opposed to female rule and power was John Knox. He wrote a book titled *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, which argued that women in power were unnatural and in direct opposition to the teachings of the Christian Bible. As you read this next source, consider: what was Knox so opposed to about strong women who held positions of power and especially those who governed over men?

- **Read:** [John Knox and the Monstrous Regiment of Women](#)
- **Read just the first three paragraphs:** [THE FIRST BLAST TO AWAKE WOMEN DEGENERATE.](#)
- **As a general reference site**, this page lists most women rulers throughout history. [Women's Rule](#)

- Last, read how **Christina of Sweden** was called the "wonder of Europe": [Christina of Sweden had a blazing vitality, intelligence and wit that made her the wonder of Europe](#)

Unit Three

H. Enlightenment

Introduction: during the Enlightenment, women's voices emerged for their rights, human rights, education, and the use of rational thought to change the belief in superstition and instead turn towards science and reason. Women like Mary Wollstonecraft were known for rejecting philosophers such as those found in writers like [Jean Jacques Rousseau](#), whose thesis argued in part that paterfamilias was the only legitimate familial and hierarchical structure. She was also known to have been concerned about pregnancy. Women preceding her generation and those after were deeply concerned about pregnancy and childbirth as both often brought high mortality rates due to infections such as sepsis. Sadly, Mary died of an infection related to childbirth. Her daughter became one of the world's most famous writers, known primarily for her work on resurrection and raising the dead. Her daughter was [Mary Shelley](#), and her book was [Frankenstein](#).

- **Read and watch** (short videos on pages one and two): [Enlightenment](#)
 - What was it about the Enlightenment that allowed for women's voices to emerge?
- **Listen** to this podcast about Mary Shelly, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron: [Noble Blood: The Romantics of Viodati](#)
 - What surprised you about the circumstances surrounding this period of Mary Shelly's life?

I. French Revolution

Introduction: Throughout the French Revolution, women played a critical role in almost every aspect of this period. What were women's roles in the French Revolution? For the typical Frenchwoman or those of the lower classes, the revolution became a cry for food, bread, and everyday goods, significantly when prices rose so high on flour that few could afford even the essentials. Women will lead the bread riots of France and the march on Versailles. Much of women's recollections of these events have been saved. Some of these accounts discuss the desire for democratization, that is, equality and representation, but still, others reveal, in their opinions, the [misogynistic](#) elements of the revolution. After the initial riots, women were not as involved as previous. Women were eventually further subjugated due to the revolution and held little to no status, legal or otherwise.

- **Read:** [Olympe de Gouge](#) (1748 to 1793) was the author of plays and poems, a proponent of democracy, and demanded the same rights for women that men held. She challenged the practice of male authority and the notion of male-female inequality and was eventually guillotined for her beliefs.
- **Then, read this essay:** [Women and the French Revolution](#) (made possible by "Source Collection: Women and the Revolution," in World History Commons, <https://worldhistorycommons.org/source-collection-women-and-revolution>)
- **After you finish the above, please plan time to carefully read:** [Absent Fathers and Martyred Mothers: Marie Antoinette and the Court of Louis XVI](#) (download PDF) this

article will help shape your understanding of the downfall of the French Monarchy and the French Revolution. It is 38 pages total and is quite graphic so ****caution**** as the author uses examples from the 18th century on how Marie was depicted by the Revolutionaries. Marie Antoinette was the victim of vicious propaganda. The reading has resemblance in terms of language and imagery that was used against other royal women in history who had been charged with crimes, notably, England's [Anne Boleyn](#).

Optional: if you wish to learn more about women and the French Revolution, here is a free audiobook (hosted by the Internet Archive and no login is needed) by Winifred Stevens, [*Women of the French Revolution*](#)

J. Industrial Revolution

To start, read: [Industrial Revolution](#)

Introduction: As I wrote in *Women and Work*, when the Industrial Revolution began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, factory-produced items increasingly replaced handmade goods. Many women left their farms or small towns in the hope of a better way of life; the factory system represented more money and a chance to better oneself economically and socially. Companies often sent recruiters to small villages and farms, encouraging young women to migrate to urban centers. Moreover, as industries expanded, larger companies that could mass-produce foodstuffs and goods began to replace farmers. Formerly textiles were hand-woven, usually with the aid of hand-operated tools. However, after machines were invented and powered by different processes, including water, gas, and steam, textiles could be produced cheaper and much faster. Although machines replaced hand labor, people were still needed to run the machines. Women filled a significant gap in this needed labor force, and employers were especially desirous of employing women because they would work for much lower wages than men. Women would work long hours for low wages and generally in unsafe and unsanitary conditions; factories then became known as “sweatshops.” Defined during the latter stages of the Industrial Revolution, the term sweatshops meant to convey how much labor factory owners could “sweat” out of their workers, usually women or children.

Women often experienced great hardships under the factory system. Women could be maimed, lose body parts, or, in extreme circumstances, even their lives while operating the machines. The type of work women performed included constant repetitive movements, too often difficult and dangerous operation of machinery. With the number of hours, women had to work, having an accident while on the job increased. Women were often denied breaks or long rest periods. Many worked hours almost twice what constitutes a typical workday in the twenty-first century. Working conditions were not only dangerous but also unsanitary. There were few lunchrooms or clean bathroom facilities. Women were exposed to chemicals, asbestos, and other toxins daily in the actual work itself. Little attention was paid to the cleanliness of the factories themselves, and women could slip on dirty floors or cut themselves on rusty nails or sharp machine parts. Long hours and unsanitary conditions were not the only hardships factory women faced. Forced to work between twelve and sixteen hours a day, women endured emotional, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse. Salaries were often below the living wage, and little attention was paid to on-the-job safety. Some women, when hired, were given uniforms, food, training, and a place to live on

credit. Thus, once they started working for an employer, they would already be in debt, and their wages seldom allowed them to pay off the debt, trapping them in a vicious cycle. If a woman chose to leave a factory under unpleasant circumstances, often her reputation was besmirched, and she would have a hard time finding employment. Women also faced unfair treatment in the public arena, especially in the area of law and justice.

Now, review and read: [Petty Criminality, Gender Bias, and Judicial Practice in Nineteenth Century Europe](#) (download PDF)

K. Women and World War One

Introduction: On 28 July 1914, Austria-Hungary and Serbia engaged in conflict, which soon escalated globally. Germany entered the war on the side of Austria-Hungary; France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as allies against Austria-Hungary and Germany, followed. This international conflict involved many other nations, and lasted until 11 November 1918. What were women's roles?

- **To start, review this site:** https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/womens_mobilization_for_war
- **Read:** [Over 30,000 women were there](#) and [Where Women Worked](#)
- **Read:** [Women in World War One: Societal Impacts](#)
- **Then watch this important 2 minute film:** [The Hello Girls](#)

Review what African American nurses faced during World War One. Black nurses were not allowed to treat white American soldiers *but* they were allowed to treat the enemy. At the outset of World War I, many trained Black nurses enrolled in the American Red Cross hoping to gain entry into the Army or Navy Nurse Corps. As the war escalated, public pressure increased to enlist Black women. Finally, shortly after the Armistice, eighteen Black Red Cross nurses were offered Army Nurse Corps assignments. Assigned to Camp Grant, Illinois, and Camp Sherman, Ohio, they lived in segregated quarters and cared for German prisoners of war and Black male soldiers. Cessation of hostilities halted plans to assign black nurses to Camp Dodge, Camp Meade, Fort Riley, and Camp Taylor. By August 1919, all Black nurses had been released from service as the nursing corps were reduced to their peacetime levels. In the Second World War, Black nurses were also segregated, and forced to treat Axis POWs.

- **See:** <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/armys-first-black-nurses-had-tend-to-german-prisoners-war-180969069/> and <https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military>
-

Next, you will learn about the first women to officially be designated as front line soldiers. In 1918, the U.S. Army Signal Corps sent 223 women to France. They were masters of the latest technology: the telephone switchboard. Called, the "Hello girls" men would sometimes call them just to hear a voice. These women were considered the first front line female soldiers.

Many women were bilingual, and were championed for service by General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, demanded female “wire experts” when he discovered that inexperienced doughboys were unable to keep him connected with troops under fire. Without communications for even an hour, the army would collapse.

- **Read:** <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/women-frontlines-wwi-came-operate-telephones-180962687/>

Note that the women were not called "Hello Girls" until 1920; it has been suggested that by not calling the women soldiers, but girls, this was an attempt to reduce them in status by referring to them as children and not as lieutenant (the rank the women were assigned). From [this article](#), note that these women did not receive recognition until 1977: "But when they applied for veterans' status and benefits, 'the Army decided they were contract workers and said to them, 'Well, you were very well paid, miss. You know, you don't need to worry about this.'" The women petitioned one president after another, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1930s to Jimmy Carter in the 1970s. Finally, in 1977, six decades after the war ended — and after most of the Hello Girls had died — they were finally recognized as Army veterans. One "hello girl," Merle Egan, [said that] when she was at last recognized as a veteran: "I deserve this medal not just for serving in France, but for fighting the U.S. Army for 60 years and winning."

Finally, this last article discusses German military prisoners and British women in the First World War:

- **Read:** [We dont want any German offspring](#) (download PDF)

Unit Four

L. Women in the 1920s and 1930s

Introduction: how did women's roles change during the 1920s and 1930s? The two decades saw millions of lives lost in the Great War (the First World War) in some areas creating a gender imbalance, a pandemic, and the times were fraught with economic chaos, tremendous hardship, and great social and cultural change. Start by watching these films and then complete the readings. Note that the first film was created in the early 20th century and the language and other images used will not be considered appropriate today.

- **Watch:** [Paris, France, and the 1920s](#)
- **Lecture:** [City Girls: Berlin's Modern Women of the Weimar Republic](#)
- **Read:** [Women, wars, and world affairs: Recovering feminist International Relations, 1915-39](#) (download PDF)
- **Watch:** [How The Great Depression Changed The 1930s](#)

M. Women and the Holocaust

Introduction: Women and the Holocaust has been the focus of my research for the past twenty years. I share with you a free book written on the history of the Holocaust. Through the Internet Archive (no login required), you can access the book as a flip-book, download as an e-book, listen to the lectures as an audiobook and more. Here is the link:

Here is the link: <https://archive.org/details/a-history-of-the-holocaust-a-guide-for-the-community-college-student-oer-by-wendy-adele-marie/mode/2up>

I am assigning specific chapters for this unit. *Warning:* I must caution the reader that many of the chapters below contain potentially very triggering and graphic details of abuse, child abuse, mass atrocities, experiments on humans, gassings and shootings, torture, rape, murder, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and gendercide.

- **Read:**
 - chapter one, pp. 25-30
 - chapter six, pp. 133-236
 - chapter twelve, pp. 417-434
- **Contact me** if you would like a free copy of my second book, *Women as Nazis*.

N. Women and World War Two

Introduction: begin by reading: [Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union](#)

Allied women

Women worked in or volunteered for different positions to help the Allied war effort during World War Two. In the United States of America, over eight million women worked in munitions factories and many non-combat positions and including working in jobs that varied from clerical jobs or places in armament factories. Women were also employed as radio operators or drivers. Hundreds of thousands of allied women assisted the armed forces. Many of their experiences differed because of socioeconomic status, race, and whether they were single or married or had children. Conditions and status also varied for working war women depending on the Allied country. Regardless of their position, American women and their Allied counterparts made invaluable contributions to the war effort.

When World War Two began on 1 September 1939, Great Britain and France were the first two countries to declare war on Nazi Germany. Until the Americans were involved after the Japanese attack on the military installation at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941, women in Europe not allied with Nazi Germany and their collaborators worked valiantly, often voluntarily, to help their countries stave off the Nazi menace. Women in France who opposed the Nazis fought in the resistance and secretly worked as spies, nurses, assassins, or in any position they could help defeat the Nazi regime; as resistance to the Nazis grew throughout Europe, so grew the necessity for women's work.

During the Vichy regime and Nazi occupation of France, it was difficult for women to work in any position in opposition to the Nazis or the collaborative Vichy regime since the penalty would be imprisonment in the concentration camps or death. This commonality was found in other Nazi-occupied countries, where the crime of working against the Nazis would be the same. In Great Britain, citizens were under constant air raid attacks by the Nazi air force. British women had different experiences from France and other allied nations.

Women in Great Britain worked in many different capacities throughout the war, and their positions included administrators, drivers, and mechanics. According to her official biography at www.royal.gov.uk, HRH Princess Elizabeth - now HM Queen Elizabeth II - was trained in mechanics and was qualified as a driver during the war. Women also worked as nurses, radio operators, spies, wardens, and dozens of other positions. Women were required to register for labor positions if they were between 18 and 50, and all women who were not married were required to assist in the war effort. British women also joined the armed forces, working in many positions, from drivers, airplane transport, nursing, and air wardens. Soviet women not only worked in the positions described above but also flew combat missions, worked in agriculture and factories, and fought on the ground as well. Women in China worked as cooks, foot soldiers, laundresses, nurses, propagandists, recruiters, tailors, teachers, transporters, water carriers, weavers, and writers.

In the United States of America, for the duration of the American involvement in World War Two, women worked in unprecedented numbers to help with the war effort. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was critical in gaining both political and public acceptance for the idea of women entering the war workforce, and her tireless efforts on behalf of women's rights during the war never abated. She recognized that women were needed after men were sent to fight in the European and Pacific theaters. The government, via The War Manpower Commission, began a series of advertising campaigns to help convince women that war work brought compensation

and was part of what a patriotic American woman could do to help win the war. It worked as over eight million women entered the war workforce. The government also sponsored training programs to reach and teach as many women as possible for wartime employment. In addition, as the war progressed, there was a need for even more wartime goods, and companies needed labor to produce those goods; this factor allowed many women to take over their husbands' jobs or replace those men who left to fight. Women also went to work in the agrarian sector. The government continued to develop ways to encourage women to go to work, and the Rosie the Riveter campaign, as it was later known, was one way.

The government developed a series of patriotic posters, later known as "Rosie the Riveter," which portrayed attractive women in work attire formerly only worn by men. The women also wore makeup with neatly groomed hair. The idea was to make the concept of work outside of the home appealing to women and combat fears that if women worked in "masculine" jobs, they could retain their femininity, hence the makeup and other accoutrements worn by the women in the posters. Collectively, women who worked in munitions factories were given the nickname Rosie the Riveter, and American culture soon reflected this new woman; from depictions in movies to a painting by Norman Rockwell, the Rosies came to symbolize American women who worked for the war effort.

Women who went to work in the factories trained for a variety of skilled positions, from electricians to welders, jobs that in the past were viewed as work that only men were capable of performing. Women proved this stereotype wrong, succeeding in skilled assembly and manufacturing. Women assembled or built airplanes, bombs, tanks, and other war machines. Women worked as crane operators, truck drivers, and various jobs in shipyards. Non-factory war work also opened up for women and included positions such as chemists and researchers. War work opened up avenues for women of different backgrounds, races, and ethnicities.

Women who came from various backgrounds were often able to find war work because the demand for workers was so great. Government and factory recruiters would offer training programs in high schools or other areas designed to reach as many women as possible. Women from minority groups were also able to find work. Discrimination was an issue that many minority women faced. African American women would be the last hired for a position and were refused jobs. If hired, African American women were typically paid lower wages and often given menial tasks to perform. Occasionally white women protested about working alongside African American women or over having to share a lunch table. However, because thousands of African American women could find work and make a difference in the war effort, some boundaries were broken, and African American women entered the wartime industry in record numbers. These women worked in factories, and thousands also signed up for service in the armed forces. Asian and Hispanic women also faced similar challenges in the workplace. Women of all ethnic backgrounds did face some common ordeals. Although women worked in jobs that usually men held, they were rarely paid the same that a man would earn, despite the government's encouragement for employers to treat women fairly. Childcare was another issue that affected women, as it was not always available.

Similar to their British allied counterparts, American women also served as armed forces members. Many government officials and politicians were vehemently opposed to women

serving in the military. Edith Nourse Rogers, congressperson from Massachusetts, with backing from Eleanor Roosevelt, introduced legislation in 1941 designed to allow women to sign up for duty in the military. Once the United States entered the war on 7 December 1941, the idea of women entering the military became a severe congressional consideration. Some politicians still opposed women entering the military. Notions even existed that women in service would lose their femininity. Later General George C. Marshall supported Roosevelt and Rogers. The bill to create an auxiliary division of the army passed on 14 May 1942; under continued pressure from Roosevelt, other branches opened auxiliary units for women. However, military women did not achieve complete acceptance.

American women who worked for the military served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), a division of the United States Army; Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPS); and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), a division of the United States Navy. These agencies were developed in 1942. Women also worked for the Coast Guard and the Marines. These women worked in various non-combatant positions, from telephone and radio operators to nurses. Women who served in the American armed forces broke gender barriers for women in the military.

Women who worked for the Allies during World War Two should be forever commended for their contributions. Without these women's sacrifice, labor, and heroism, the war may not have been won. Women's work was invaluable to the war effort and helped secure an Allied victory. Known as the domestic patronage theory, queens, princesses, and noblewomen became economic resources for the patronage of writers, philosophers, artists, musicians, and sometimes clergy members, which some saw as unnatural for women to wield such influence.

Axis women

The Axis powers employed women during World War Two. The Axis refers to Nazi Germany, Italy, Japan, and other collaborative governments. Nazi Germany employed the most significant number of women, but women in all Axis countries worked in different positions that included clerical work, assembly, air wardens, agrarian work, military auxiliaries, industrial work, and camp guards. Once the Allies entered the war and began to secure victories over the Axis powers, women were conscripted for work duties. The patriarchal government structures of the Axis powers not only removed political and social advances women had made in previous decades and did not allow for full acceptance in the workforce, equal treatment, or fair hours or wages for women who worked in war industries in war jobs, although women in Nazi Germany held leadership positions and had demonstrable agencies of power.

Before World War Two, society was predominantly patriarchal in Japan, and women had few rights. Therefore, in the context of employment, few women worked except in jobs that accepted women. Women usually worked in textiles or the agrarian sector. Industries where heavy machinery was employed or where any mechanical assembly related to war work was performed, for the most part, did not accept women. Women who did work tended to be single or widowed, as married women usually did not work unless it was directly for a family-owned business or because of severe economic necessity. After Japan declared war on the United States on 7 December 1941, Japanese women were still not accepted into the war industry. By 1943, with

Allied victories over Japanese forces increasing, all women were required to work in the war industry, and enormous hardships, from terrible working conditions to tremendously lower wages than their male counterparts.

In Italy, women also faced discrimination in the regime of Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, as opposed to the emancipation of women. Women could find work in government positions – generally administrative –, and if they did find the rare position in business or industry, women still faced low wages, long hours, and unequal treatment. Jobs were not as plentiful for women in the Italian industry as in the other Axis countries. Italy was slower to industrialize; most jobs for women were found in the agrarian sectors. In Vichy, France, women could work in state-sponsored agencies or the agrarian sector. As the war progressed, both the Nazi and Vichy governments conscripted French women for labor in war production. It is important to note that thousands of Italian, French and other women worked in resistance movements against the Axis powers.

In Nazi Germany, women were employed in government jobs considered "acceptable" for women to work. These positions were generally administrative or were part of auxiliary organizations. Women also served in civil service positions and worked as nurses, political organizers, or military auxiliaries. Interestingly, Adolf Hitler personally employed a female air pilot, Hannah Reitsch, one of Germany's most significant pilots and the only woman to receive a *Luftwaffe* flying medal. He also employed a female chef. To promote the ideal cultural roles for women, Hitler appointed Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, a mother and widow, as *Reichsfrauenführerin* (leader of Reich women) on 24 February 1934; she was appointed by Hitler as the leader of the *NS-Frauenschaft* [National Socialist Women's League], the highest-ranking leadership position for a woman in Nazi Germany.

Scholtz-Klink set an example for *Frauenwerk* (women's work), defining what acceptable women's working roles for the state were. The preferred work for women that she advocated was that of wife and mother. Some women, such as Leni Riefenstahl, worked indirectly for the party; Riefenstahl conceived, directed, and produced films for the Third Reich. As the war progressed and the need for labor intensified, women were conscripted for war work.

As the Nazi control of Europe expanded, so did the need for labor. Women worked in war industries, including assembly and light manufacturing. Positions open for women not in factories included military auxiliary helpers and air wardens. As the number of concentration and extermination camps increased, jobs for women also grew. Women were employed in different administrative positions, notably as *Aufseherinnen* (overseers) or camp guards. Women also worked as *Kapos* (prisoners appointed as block commanders), forced supervisory positions in the camps.

Some women volunteered for a position in the camps hoping that they would later be hired for pay. These positions ranged from secretaries to switchboard operators to camp guards. Many women were hired as guards or other auxiliaries or later conscripted as nurses. One woman, Herta Oberhauser, was first employed as a doctor for the *BDM* (German Girl's League) and later hired as a camp doctor. The only woman tried at the Nuremberg Doctor's Trials, and she performed horrific experiments on prisoners. It is unclear how many women were employed in

the camps. Some estimates have suggested that Ravensbrück, the main concentration camp for women, employed several thousand women as camp guards to work in sub-camps (there were 300 such camps for women alone). Women were also sent to work in other camps and the six killing centers (formerly known as death camps or extermination camps) such as Auschwitz, where female guards actively participated in genocidal actions, including selection. Nazi records indicated that by January of 1945, over three thousand women were working at several different camps. This number is probably much higher.

It remains difficult to ascertain the total number of women who worked for Axis countries. Existing governments destroyed many records as the Axis powers lost the war, and although some estimates exist, based on extant records, complete, reliable figures of the total number of women employed by Japan, Italy, Vichy France, and Nazi Germany in war industries are, at best, estimates. Women's rights deteriorated under these regimes, and few advances for women developed concerning work. Women who entered the workforce, not as prisoners for the Axis powers, usually because of economic necessity or due to conscription., and the very same regimes that sought to remove any gains women had made in terms of rights also created environments that demanded women enter war industrial work because men were deployed to fight in the war. War made work possible for women, but much of the work women did for the Axis powers did not allow for measurable cultural, socioeconomic, or political advances. After the war, post-war reconstruction created an entirely different employment structure, and women still had to overcome not just the legacy of war work but attitudes towards the acceptance of women in the workplace, regardless of profession or position.

Unit Five

O. Post-War Gender Roles

Introduction: what were post-Second World War gender roles for women? Here are a few readings and videos that explore how radically women's roles shifted.

Read: [Postwar Gender Roles and Women in American Politics](#)

Read: [WW2: Did the war change life for women?](#)

Read: [European Research Council: What is the role of women in post-war times?](#)

P. Current Issues

Introduction: what issues are women facing today? Here are a few sources to review.

- **Watch:** [Swiss women only got the right to vote in 1971](#)
- **Read:** [Women's Health Issues in 21st Century](#)
- **Read:** [Women during Recessions in France and Germany The Gender Biases of Public Policies](#)
- **Read:** [Current News](#)